

The 2 items on your agenda today are the primary reasons for my pending retirement after 36 years. Every teacher knows that you will be reinventing the wheel in regard to curriculum and it's development when you enter the profession. This reinvention goes beyond the pale. In my humble opinion Common Core appears to be an extension of the present Administration's experiment with Socialism. We, in this country, are so obsessed with being number 1 in everything, we are ignoring the very problems that we are employed to solve. Yes, other countries are ahead of us in the category of Standardized Test scores, but what is the overall affect on the student? Is this student going to be an integral part of society, or a cubicle dweller? I would hope we will aspire to the former rather than the latter. This is not to say that The Common Core lacks effective strategies, or content. Some of what I have seen being developed is sound. You could take it, infuse it into what already exists in a school system and employ it without reconstructing the wheel. I have seen so many reform efforts stagnate and wither away, so what makes anyone think that this will be any different. Schools and teachers will be investing huge amounts of time, effort, and money into something that is unproven and untested. The new Smarter Balanced Tests are on the cusp of implementation. It is uncharted territory fraught with potential pitfalls. The Commissioner would have you believe that these tests will 'count.' That flies in the face of logic when all you can look forward to are aggregate scores. Why not start at a slower pace and field test with a smaller population. This round of tests are a "pig in a poke" approach. We as teachers know not the types of questions students will be subjected to, nor the depth or breadth of those questions. Many are developing Common Core materials that may or may not be used in the future. There is too much uncertainty, yet the Governor and Commissioner jumped right in and dragged us along with them. Of course, in the name of "REFORM."

As we are aware the Governor holds teachers in low esteem as was evidenced by his tenure comment. It has been claimed that teachers were asked to give input in regard to Common Core and the new Evaluation Plan. Really? No one ever asked me or any of my colleagues. The rank and file are never included in what will affect them . Only those who the administration carefully chooses are involved. They seem to employ the "trickle down" approach. The chosen few will work elbow to elbow with the mucky mucks and then drop it all on us. Their usual motos operandi. Those of us in the trenches know what works and what doesn't. I can assure you that without a concerted effort to engage parents, no reform program will work, teachers cannot do it all. Yet we'll suffer the brunt of the anger from parents, the Governor, and the Commissioner when the test scores plummet.

This is too much, and too fast.

As for the Evaluation Plan, well accountability appears to be the main thrust behind it. I can assure you that I have been accountable to many students and families over my 36 years. I have also been accountable to the town that I work in. I have never taken that lightly. Yet, if I were to continue teaching under the Evaluation Plan as legislated, I would be so buried under paperwork and assessments that I would not have time to teach. Administrators would be at a disadvantage also. They are the designated building leaders and they will be evaluating rather than leading. The inception of both of these concepts was not well thought out, and simply shoved down our throats. Fortunately legislators listened to us and the brakes were put on at least a portion of all of this.

Rather than hamstringing us with onerous evaluation plans and jamming Common Core down the State's throat let teachers do what they do best... TEACH!! Make a genuine effort to embrace us as equals. Ask us all what works. We have our fingers on the pulse of what works. Not those in offices that have long removed themselves of the day to day workings of the classroom. Have some empathy for us, something most administrators and commissioners have removed from their repertoires. As stakeholders we are as important as parents and students. Please remember that. As I retire, I hope that I will see a concerted effort put forth to bring the rank and file into the discussion of reform and not leave it to a disconnected few.

Carl G. DalBon
Brooklyn Elementary School
119 Gorman Road
Brooklyn Ct. 06234
860- 774-7577 ext 356